

Busmen in action - Solidarity



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Solidarity Pamphlet No.17

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Several of the smaller papers discussed the strike. None however seem to have grasped the significance of the new organizational forms adopted by the workers for maintaining contact with one another – in particular the mass branch meeting with open invitations to other branches to send mass deputations. These ingenious tactics cut across several attempts by the union leaders to isolate the various garages. They could become important in future struggles. In Glasgow they enabled the busmen to use the official union machinery for purposes of which the union officials disapproved – the establishment of contacts between rank-and-file militants in the various garages and direct confrontation of the officials by hundreds of the men they claim to represent.

The strike showed once again how crucial it is for workers to keep in contact with each other; within a single enterprise, from one city to another, between different sectors. We publish this pamphlet as a contribution to that effort.

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WHO BOSSES THE BUSES

The livelihood of thousands of busmen and the services available to millions of passengers depend today on the State (or on various partially State-owned and State-controlled bodies).

It is not generally appreciated how far the concentration of this type of capital – bus vehicles

- has gone. It is worth giving a few figures.

Of the 76,000 buses in Great Britain, some 7,000 are owned by the London Transport Board.

A further 14,300 vehicles are wholly owned by the Transport Holding Company, a nationalised concern - through 29 Tilling LS Companies (9,500 vehicles) and 7 Scottish bus companies (4,700 vehicles). The Transport Holding Company partially owns 11,000 vehicles owned jointly with various private concerns, such as the British Electric Traction Company in which the Transport Holding Company has a 50% holding). The T.H.C. also has minor holdings in such privately owned companies as Timpson and Sons Ltd. and Black and White Motorways Ltd. If we include the buses owned by various municipal authorities, it will be seen that nearly 50% of the buses in Britain are owned or controlled, to various degrees, by governmental or semi-governmental bodies.

Since many of the privately-owned buses run no regular public services, the travelling public has to rely even more on these State-controlled bodies than the above figures would indicate.

This massive concentration of capital in the hands of the state means that these bodies are important employers of labour, (The L.T.B. employs some 38,000 busmen. The 29 Tilling Companies employ 38,200 men and the 7 Scottish companies nearly 20,000 men). Despite this, each company maintains separate labour relations, separate negotiating machinery, LTB

has separate agreements with the various unions it has to deal with. Capital is concentrated, but the labour force is atomised. This makes it easy for

management to divide and rule, pitting one section against another, delaying claims here until they have been settled there, ;c.

Such tactics doubtless helped the 36 totally state-owned companies) make a total profit of

£6,717,000 in 1963. The total profits of the semi-state-owned companies came to £1,352,000.

The Glasgow Bus Strike of April 1964 is worth documenting for several reasons. Firstly it spotlighted certain problems of the busmen, which are general throughout the country.

Secondly it demonstrated the ability of the workers in dispute to throw up new ideas as to how to struggle. Thirdly it demonstrated how workers themselves can act without a 'general staff' to order them about. And fourthly it showed the urgency for some sort of rank-and-file organisation, with the means of disseminating accurate information to other busmen and to workers in other industries.

The Glasgow busmen are employed by the Glasgow Corporation. A glance at the Corporation's report 1961-62 shows very clearly what sort of a job is offered to the new recruit. During that period 3,647 men and women were accepted for employment by the Corporation. In the same period 3,179 resigned, and 330 were dismissed. When we realise that the total number employed is slightly less than 7,000, we can guess at the conditions that lead to a staff turnover of nearly 50% in twelve months. Those who moralise that workers who don't like their job should leave it and find alternative work should note that their advice has been taken quite literally by thousands of Glasgow busmen. This has not led to improved conditions and services ... quite the contrary.

To quote a member of the Langside Strike committee:

'The story really goes back to before the war, but we can begin it in 1961. That year we got a wage increase, and a new agreement was signed between the union officials and the management. Apart from other things, the new agreement incorporated a 42-hour week. But our negotiators worked a flanker on us. The agreement was abominable, and allowed us to work a 46-hour week. Needless to say it was all signed and settled before we got a chance to discuss it in any branch meetings.

'When it was discussed the men weren't backward in criticising it. The negotiators said that discussions would be re-opened, and amendments would be made for the workers' benefit.

Compulsory overtime was one of the main points at issue. I was one of those who shouted about it; we were getting more unpaid spreadover time.

'The promises to re-open negotiations were never kept. Apathy spread among the men.

Masses left the job. We were kidded along. "We'll do it next week, next week" , and so on. We had 1939 conditions in 1961; the alterations in the agreement had made conditions go backwards not forwards. There was too much cohesion between management and union representatives and no cohesion between negotiators and the men.'

The resentment of the men against the new agreement was universal throughout the fleet.

Several garages urged the District Committee of the union at least to call a mass meeting of the men, so that they might have the opportunity of putting their point of view. As recently as August 28, 1963, the Ibrox Branch Committee had sent such a request to the District Committee. But all such requests were ignored. Similarly, in late October 1963, Knightswood and Langside branches had sent a letter to the District Committee demanding that notice should be given to the management of termination of the Agreement at the end of the required three month period.

The Langside Committee members had assumed that the letter had been forwarded, as requested, to the Transport Convenor; when the three months was up they were amazed to learn that District Secretary Alex Grant had done no such thing! When asked why, his answer was that 'it had been decided not to push things as there were national negotiations under way regarding the 40-hour week'. The District Committee had naturally 'agreed' with the eight objections lodged against the existing agreement. They just felt it wasn't the right time, to press the matter!

Whatever their failings,(!) the union leaders are never short of excuses for doing nothing. One of their most commonly used ones, in recent months, has been: 'Let's wait and see what the London men get'. This argument holds no water with

the Glasgow men, who realize, they are already working under far inferior conditions than their London colleagues.

THE NEW SCHEDULES

In October 1963, the Glasgow Corporation suddenly posted new schedules, which for most garages meant an even greater intensification of work, longer spells on duty, later finishing, longer gaps between buses on the roads. From the rank and file the attitude was unmistakeable. The men were NOT prepared to work these cycles. This is illustrated by the results of secret ballot held by Ibrox depot at the time. The vote was 227 to 17 for strike-action if the schedules were not withdrawn. The bosses took the hint, and the schedules were withdrawn. As far as the busmen were concerned, the matter was finished. Then came a negotiated wage increase, in February 1964 (14/- for drivers and 10/6 for conductors). Their wages were now £11.12.9 and £11.4.0. after one year's service.' The management hoped that following this 'concession' the men might be more 'reasonable' and suddenly, in April 1964, the schedules appeared again. The response in the garages was immediate.

Ibrox branch met, and overwhelmingly decided to strike on the following Saturday night.

Langside garage met, and decided to start the strike 24 hours earlier, believing, quite rightly, that the strike would be more effective if it began on the Friday night. After a quick discussion, Ibrox advanced the time of their withdrawal of labour to coincide with Langside's.

We relate these details to dispel any illusion there may be that there was some carefully planned and pre-arranged plot. On the contrary, the significant thing about the dispute was that there were no pre-established strike leaders, although as the strike developed the various

depots tended to throw up their own spokesmen. What happened, quite literally, was that the men looked at the cycles (schedules), had a think about it, and out they came.

UNION OFFICIALS

True to form the union officials, and especially Alex Grant, Glasgow District Secretary of the TGWU, Chairman of the Glasgow Trades Council, and a worthy disciple of George Brown (in more ways than one) was the most prominent in the 'struggle to get the men back to work

'in order that negotiations: might continue'. As Grant was to tell the 'Evening Citizen' on April 6: 'All I can say is that nearly all our depots are out. Our job is to have them all in.' Another interesting point is the attitude of the elected District Committee, which had voted acceptance of the new cycles by 9 to 4. Driver Charlie C., of Langside Garage, had an interesting comment to make on this. 'The 9 to 4 vote of the District Committee shows that some of the members voted against the wishes of their own branch members. The fact that the strike was practically solid by Monday night proves this beyond question'.

What caused the District Committee to act in this way?

Another driver offered a possible solution. 'They voted in this way on the advice of District Secretary Grant. Had the vote been taken against the schedules, then the District Committee would have been forced to take action. The strike would have been official, at least at District Committee level. By urging acceptance of the schedules, Grant ensured that any action would be 'unofficial'. And why did Grant and his friends want the dispute unofficial? Well, the Glasgow Corporation is Labour controlled. The Labour Party rules in George Square. The union officials are friendly with them, and are generally members of the party'.

There was certainly no disharmony in thought between the union leadership and the Transport Convenor of the Glasgow Corporation, Labour Councillor Sam Hughes. On April 6

the 'Evening Citizen' enthusiastically reported Hughes as saying: 'The strike is unofficial. The unions have been doing everything they could to get the men back to work. I feel sure that half the men do not know what the strike is about.' Later the same day three union officials tried in vain to talk to 250 angry drivers and conductors on a piece of waste ground near Parkhead Garage. Brother Peter Conlon had the unpleasant task of reporting back to the men on a meeting with

Labour's Transport Convenor Sam Hughes. Willie Scholes, Scottish Secretary TGWU had been present also. Bro. Conlon got no further than: 'I have a promise that negotiations will resume as soon as' when pandemonium broke out. Men and women chanted: 'Resign! ... We won't go back! ... Get off that platform ... We have been betrayed'.

Union official Phillip Jenkins eventually asked if there was a proposer and seconder for a proposal to return to work. About a dozen held up their hands. Then the vote to remain on strike was taken and there was a forest of hands in the air. The situation couldn't have been clearer. Union bosses and Labour Party bureaucrats on one side ... the men on the other.

OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL STRIKES

At no time is there more hypocrisy on the part of management, union bureaucrats and the press than during an 'unofficial' dispute. On these occasions, these worthies suggest they would support the strikers if only they were 'abiding by the union constitution'. But every militant knows from his own experience that the employers never have and NEVER WILL

support workers struggling to better their conditions. Just when have these 'gentlemen'

supported an 'official' strike? Repeatedly during the Glasgow strike, the Glasgow Transport Corporation 'supported' the TGWU District Committee in its 9 to 4 vote. Repeatedly they used this vote as an argument to get the men to return to work. Just how stupid do they think the workers are?

We know quite well that the Transport Corporation, like all other employers, will recognize union decisions that hamstring the workers but will denounce the unions when, under rank and file pressure, they make a few militant noises.

The hatred of the employers and their allies for unofficial action is fundamental. An unofficial dispute is one where the men themselves, at rank and file level, take the decisions.

Let's be under no misapprehension about this. Nothing can be more democratic; and nothing more revolutionary. An unofficial action challenges the very basis of class society. It challenges the ruling class conception that society should have one group of people who take the decisions (the managers and trade union officials) and another group (the workers) who exist only to carry out those decisions. In an unofficial action the workers themselves are in control. They cease to be a manipulated mass, or 'steam' to be turned on or off at the whim of their so-called leaders. The people who will have to make the sacrifices themselves take the decisions. Resourcefulness, initiative and solidarity are called for and are usually forthcoming in abundant measure. Hence unofficial action is often the highest form of struggle. In this sense these struggles give us a sort of pre-view into the future socialist society, a society where ordinary people will be in complete control of their lives both at work and in leisure.

These struggles demonstrate to many workers how unnecessary are both the 'managers' and

'trade union leaders'. In any battle with the employer, it is essential for victory that authority lie with, and remain with, the rank and file. Only in this way will the self-confidence and consciousness of the workers be raised. From this point of view an official strike may even at times be a step backwards, particularly where 'official recognition' means a surrender of power and initiative from the rank and file into the hands of the professional trade union bureaucrats. For the development of a militant consciousness, how a battle is won is often as important what is won.

NEED FOR RANK AND FILE UNITY

In any major unofficial dispute it can be taken for granted that the men will find against them: 1. the management

2. the press

3. the police (protecting the right to scab)

4. the full-time trade union officials.

This powerful coalition make it all the more vital that there be rank-and-file unity.

One of the main weapons of our rulers to prevent workers achieving any kind of control of the job is the 'divide and. rule' tactic. Divide the workers up into categories and sections. Pay differentials. Grant slightly different conditions in one factory to another, or in this case, one depot to another. This is exactly what the schedules did. Some depots like Larkfield noticed no marked deterioration in their conditions. On the other hand the new cycles in Langside represented, on average, an increase of 24 hours work per. schedule, with a noticeable 'build-up' on the unpopular late duties (for example, on route 34 duties 14, 20, 21, 22 and 27, all late duties, all have the maximum of 4 hours 45 minutes on duty, whereas, under the old schedules, no duty had this maximum duty spell. Incidentally, what other industry today demands of its workers continuous, uninterrupted work for 4 hours without even a cup of tea?

*It is doubtful whether even the Factory Act would allow workers to work that

long at a stretch, without a break. This point might be looked into by Glasgow busmen.

There was obviously a need therefore for a meeting of all garages, so that the men in one depot could learn the feelings of the men in other depots.

The initiative for the calling of such a meeting came from Ibrox depot, whose committee decided to hold a 'public branch meeting', to which all other branches would be invited. This

meeting was called on the Monday afternoon, April 6, at the Christian Institute, Bothwell Street.

The hall had a seating capacity of 750. It was half-filled before the Ibrox workers, numbering about 600, marched in. In a few minutes the hall was packed with strikers standing in every available space and grouped on the platform. Hundreds of late arrivals were stopped by the police from entering the building. It was estimated by the press that more than a thousand workers were packed into the hall. Yet everything was efficiently organized. Each branch had its allocated seating accommodation, Ibrox in the front (after all, it was an Ibrox Branch meeting!).

The meeting was addressed by garage representatives, the overwhelming majority of them rank-and-file members. When it came to the vote, only Ibrox branch were allowed to vote.

The other garages showed where they stood by stamping their feet and cheering in support of the Ibrox decision for the continuance of the strike. By Monday night the strike was solid at nearly all garages. Only 100 of the 1,300 double-decker buses in Glasgow were running.

MASS PARTICIPATION IS ILLEGAL

A similarly organized Ibrox meeting was called on Wednesday, April 8, at Glasgow Concert Hall. It was attended by 1,450 busmen from the 11 garages throughout the city.

All the time there was constant pressure being put on the union officials themselves to call a mass meeting, and so obviate the necessity for these 'open branch meetings'. But consistently these requests were refused. The union bosses knew quite well that if they sponsored the meeting, the result would be that they would have an 'official' strike on their hands. They therefore argued that the Ibrox meeting was 'illegal'. They were determined they would not

'legalise' it. But the fact that they had decreed the meeting 'unconstitutional' did not prevent Alex Grant and Joe Gilroy (Regional Passenger Secretary TGWU) from attending it, and speaking to the assembled workers, urging them to return to work. It was in reply to this demand by the union officials that Peter Callaghan, Secretary of Ibrox branch, made it quite clear that the men would be happy to return to work at an hour's notice if the busmen were allowed to operate the old schedules. 'With the 1,450 looking on the Ibrox men then voted -

five of them dissenting - to stay out' ('Scottish Daily Express', April 19, 1964).

The meeting gave the militants from all garages the opportunity to address militants of other garages in the presence of the union officials. The differences between the two points of view were made crystal clear. The meeting also enabled links to be established between the garages. All this was both within the official structure of the union - and yet at the same time an attempt to break through the straight-jackets and stranglehold of procedure, manoeuvre and delegation of decision-taking which normally prevent contacts between rank-and-file members of the union who happen to belong to different branches. The opinion was expressed by many busmen that the Ibrox branch Committee was doing the District Committee's job for it. They felt that it would have been even better had the District Committee done what it should have done, and called the mass meetings on its own initiative.

No one can argue with this, except to point out that it is common experience that

the union bureaucrats, whenever possible, tend to resist attempts by the rank and file to express themselves. There is a difference between what is desirable and what is likely.

THE RETURN TO WORK

The strike lasted only a few days. By the end of the week most of the men were drifting back to work. But talking to the busmen, there is no sign of demoralization. Busman after busman made the point that this was round one. So far all that has been achieved is getting the Lord Provost to 'promise to investigate' the Corporation's Transport Department, and forcing the

union to 'recommence negotiations'. The busmen themselves have realized that their greatest weakness was the lack of coordination between garages on a rank and file level. Already a rank-and-file meeting has been held between five of the leading garages. The busmen have also realised the need for other workers to be kept informed. Throughout the strike most of the information the workers had was derived from press reports, which were consistently false or misleading.

THE CONFUSION

Driver A., of Langside, emphasized that the confusion among the men was mainly due to this lack of factual information. As he put it: 'This was the biggest fight in 30 years. Nobody was intimidated to go on strike. They all went voluntarily, coloured and casual workers too. The reason it wasn't 100% was through lies, cheating, things we didn't do. The people who didn't support us were not told the truth by the people who were supposed to represent us. They would not allow us to tell everybody the truth. We will not be content until everybody knows the truth. We must see that this is taken care of next time.' One of the good features of the aftermath is the realization among those depots that came out 100% that their brothers in the other sheds lacked information. There is therefore not the animosity that often arises in industrial disputes.

Between the Monday and Thursday the situation was often confused. Five garages (Langside, Ibrox, Knightswood, Cartcraig and Hampden Trolley) were 100% solid throughout in their support of the strike. Parkhead and Larkfield were more divided. The others (Possilpark, Govan, Maryhill and Newlands) were uncertain and either voted early for a return to work or decided to await the result of the Wednesday 'mass' meeting, and then failed to carry out its recommendations - although even here there were minorities in favour of solidarity action.

More confusion followed the Wednesday meeting. Throughout the Thursday there was a gradual drift back to work. Not all this confusion can be attributed to the press. There is an oft-quoted rumour (which it has not been able to substantiate) that Grant was telling one garage that another garage was returning when this was not in fact the case. This would seem to fit in with the experience of Peter Callaghan, Ibrox branch secretary, who was in the union office on the Monday, the third day of the strike. He heard a girl answer the phone and say:

'Yes, that's right, Maryhill will return to work tomorrow'. Half an hour later Peter checked with Maryhill. They knew nothing about any such decision.

This confusion, deliberately created by the press and union officials alike, was one of the most demoralizing aspects of the strike. No one was quite sure what was going on at the other garages. Were they solid? How solid?" How many

scab crews were running? And more important, what were the real feelings of the mass of the men? To what extent were they being manipulated by the officials? To what extent were they succumbing to the mass of propaganda everyone was churning out on behalf of the management?

Looked at in retrospect this lack of firm contact between the garages, built up before the strike, was one of the things that did as much as anything to weaken the strike. Improvised contacts built up during the dispute were fine. But they are no substitute for contacts built on deep mutual confidence and understanding over a long period.

NO SOLIDARITY ACTION

Another weakness of the struggle - and a lesson which apparently hasn't been learned by the majority of busmen - is the need to involve other sections of the movement in action.

Throughout the strike the Blue Trains (an electrified overhead railway) and the underground worked to full capacity. So did the SMT buses which operate to other towns throughout

Scotland. No attempt was made to enlist support. Many busmen felt that the dispute was 'their own affair', and that it had nothing to do with other transport workers.

It is imperative that this isolationism be ended. It enabled the employers to play one section against the other very effectively. The Underground workers represent a real problem. In the main they are old tram-men, or busmen nearing retirement that have been given lighter work by the Corporation for a few years. There is therefore a strong feeling of 'loyalty' to the Glasgow Corporation among these men. No suggestions have been forthcoming as to how this problem can be overcome, apart from a Communist Party member who argued very superficially that the answer was a simple matter of 'changing the leadership of the Underground branch'. His problem was that the alternative 'leader' didn't have any support because he drank too much!

THE PRESS

The most interesting aspect of the press reaction to the strike was how they succeeded in virtually confining the news of the dispute to the Scottish papers or to Scottish editions of the London papers. One would have thought that a city of 1 ¼ millions without public transport was worthy of at least a few inches of space. Or could it be that behind this reluctance to disseminate news of the dispute was the knowledge that elsewhere in the country bus workers are faced with the same problems of ever tightening schedules and ever increasing intensification of work? Could it be that they were scared stiff of possible solidarity action?

Without exception the Scottish press reports were deliberately misleading. For example the Evening Citizen proclaimed editorially: 'Let the busmen, many of whom can give no good reason for the strike, think of the damage they may inflict on their own best interests. The main cause of the conflict - new night schedules, approved by the union - has been forgotten in a surge of ill-feeling'. This is simply false. The dispute had absolutely nothing to do with night schedules ... schedules which the average busman works for a week, once every two and a half years. Needless to say, no attempt was made really to discover the origin of the 'ill-feeling'.

As the strike progressed the Evening Citizen sided positively with the scabs. 'Consider', it said, 'the men and women of spirit who refused to be swept with the tide of raucous rhetoric, who defied the catcalls and jeers of their colleagues and kept at least some skeleton services running. They deserve Glasgow's heartfelt thanks.'

The Scottish Daily Express was even more vicious. It referred to busmen who 'sheeplike followed a foolish lead' and denounced them as 'dupes of strike-happy agitators'. As the days passed, the Express showed it had other cards up its sleeves. It 'discovered' that the strike 'was all' a communist plot, engineered by one Peter Callaghan, secretary of the Ibrox branch.

Seven years previously Bro. Callaghan had attended a Youth Festival in Moscow. Four years previously he had been active in the shipyard and engineers' strike on Clydeside. The Express quoted from IRIS, that notorious rag that

fingers militants. It started a violent red-baiting campaign when Brother Callaghan, quite rightly in our opinion, refused to discuss with the paper either his own political views or his past political associations.

The Express campaign developed into open incitement to assault Callaghan. Under banner headlines the paper asked: 'Can no one stop this man Callaghan?'. This was coupled with numerous pictures of the Ibrox conductor, and the disclosure of his home address. In three successive issues the Express wrote about Callaghan and his family, ignoring as irrelevant the issues about which the strike was being waged. Such is the contempt the yellow press has for its readers. The same filthy tactics had been used by the Daily Mirror against Bro. Doyle of the ETU, during the power workers work-to-rule in November 1962. Far from being the

organizer of a plot behind the strike, Peter Callaghan has related how, after the strike had been going for four days, and people were beginning to drift back to work, he had suggested calling it off to maintain 100% unity. But his suggestion had not been accepted by the rank and file in Ibrox garage.

As for practical suggestions, all that Jack McGill, 'Scotland's foremost industrial reporter'

could suggest to readers of the Express was that the 'bus workers should be guided by their union leaders - the men they have chosen to represent them officially'. Isn't it time someone taught McGill and other clowns that full-time officials in the TGWU are not chosen from below but appointed from above? Doesn't he know that Mr. Cousins, unlike himself, has the job for life, however many bloomers he may commit?

METHODS OF STRUGGLE

In action, the Working class often throws up new methods of struggle. Ideas catch on because they are obviously effective. Industrial history is often made in this way, and it is a major task of revolutionaries to publicize these methods.

Certainly the most interesting episodes in the Glasgow struggle were the two mass meetings called by the Ibrox Garage, and attended by representatives from other garages. We have already mentioned these.

The 'gentlemen of the press' can never comprehend that workers, whatever their attitude to traditional political parties, and no matter how browned off they may be with the union, are certainly not apathetic in matters which concern them directly and over which they feel their actions can have some effect.

The leaders of trade unions and political parties may bemoan the sympathy proportion of members attend official meetings. During the strike we were able to observe how these leaders reacted to tried to denounce it as 'unconstitutional'. We are not surprised that they prefer the apathy which it in turn reinforces.

With regard to the physical struggle nothing very new emerged. There were pickets. And scabs. And the police to protect the scabs. Apart from talking on the part of the pickets, there was no violence.

On the Monday afternoon there were reported scuffles at Possilpark, and at Parkhead where

'500 men formed a human road block' (Daily Express) to prevent scabs taking out buses (our cover represents this incident). A sit-down at this stage might have been very effective. A crowd of 500, having to be individually carried to the black marias (probably not readily available, anyway could have taken the police several hours to clear. Men standing around can easily be pushed about. Moreover there were no pre-arranged court rooms to cope with all this. This is something to be kept in mind for the future. Striking Japanese railway workers have recently used this tactic on railway lines with great effect. Another method used by the men was to board scab buses, thus making them unavailable to passengers. According to the Daily Express (April 7, 1964) 'strikers fought with

police to board the double deck bus. At one point more than twenty were packed on the inside deck'. The legal position should be fully looked into. Since when was one of the functions of the police to prevent people from boarding buses by fighting them?

GETTING THE FACTS KNOWN

Busmen, by the nature of their job, are in an excellent position to win the support of large sections of the travelling public, the vast majority of whom are themselves workers.

Passengers can see for themselves the conditions under which the busmen must work. They see the conductor struggling through standing passengers, lugging, a heavy ticket machine, handling money, giving change, looking after the safety of the public at every stop. They see the driver, pulling his bus about through steadily worsening traffic conditions, contending with the repeated bell-ringing in his ear, dodging from traffic lane to traffic lane to pull into the kerb at each stop. Only in the transport industry are other workers able to gain this insight into another man's job. There is enormous potential support here if the busmen take the trouble to cultivate it in their day to day conduct.

As the services are cut, and the queues get longer, one immediate suggestion that springs to mind is the production of a leaflet to be given to the frustrated waiting would-be passengers, explaining the situation, the speed-up, the reason for the staff shortage, the cuts in 'service and the 'increasing fares; showing the identity of interests, and the need for a joint struggle against the transport bosses. It is certain that the busmen cannot win in isolation. Enormous possibilities exist for united action, if only they are grasped.

An excellent leaflet in support of the strikers was published by the Glasgow ILP (we reprint it as an appendix). It mentioned the possibility in future struggles of running the buses as normal, but the conductor refusing to collect the fares. The immediate reaction of the Corporation would be to declare a lockout. In this way the public could see that it is the employers and not the crews that are responsible for the loss of service. This method met with outstanding success when used by Paris Metro workers a few years ago. The building of good relations with the travelling public is very important. Most passengers are workers and can be won over to the side of the strikers.

This needs many leaflets and a lot of patient explanation. In Glasgow some measures were taken to enlist public support. A certain unity with the more hard-hit sections of the public was maintained. Even the "anti-strike Daily

Express (April 6, 1964) had to admit that 'the men at Knightswood Garage would allow six buses to do the run to Stobhill Hospital, while the Edinburgh Evening News (April 7, 1964) admitted that Peter Callaghan had stressed that

'nurses who found difficulty in getting to hospitals, or blind people who were unable to collect their pensions because of the strike would be given private transport' if they contacted the strike committee. But even information about these measures needs a means of dissemination. The Beaverbrook propaganda barrage cannot easily be fought. It is time busmen thought in terms of a rank-and-file bulletin of their own.

LETTERS

The following letters sent to the Press, to Bro. Callaghan and to 'Solidarity' by Glasgow busmen and other workers will give readers some idea of how high feeling ran at the time **(1) LETTER PUBLISHED IN 'GLASGOW EVENING TIMES'. (April 13, 1964)** I think it is about time that the public was given a truer picture of why the corporation bus crews went on strike in Glasgow. The strike was inaccurately reported in various newspapers day after day. It was not over the introduction of new night service schedules, as these newspapers seem to think. The busmen were trying to obtain better working conditions and felt it a step backward to work the new duty schedules (which detail the whole week's work), and they resented the almost dictatorial manner in which their protests were being ignored by those responsible for introducing the new schedules.

Busmen would have been back at work less than one day after the start of the strike if they had been allowed (as they repeatedly asked) to work the old duty schedules and were granted immediate negotiations regarding improved working conditions. Unfortunately, the voice of authority

demanded - and it was the tone of this demand which angered many - that, before negotiations could take place, the bus crews must work the new duty schedules (which had been introduced,

rejected, and withdrawn about six months earlier). Receiving no support from the district officials of their trade union in pressing for these alterations, they reluctantly decided to take the only

war left open to them unofficial strike action. The bus crews' action was described as disgraceful and irresponsible in several newspapers. - WHY, then, did the majority of garages go on strike - and remain on strike - if there was not a good cause for such drastic action? -

WHY, did the majority of bus crews continue the strike, against increasing pressure from the press, unless they were convinced that strike action was the only means possible in the circumstances? - WHY did the protests by the bus crews against the new schedules come as a surprise to those trade union officials

who accepted these new schedules on behalf of the bus crews? Think on these questions, citizens of Glasgow, before you condemn the men and women of the bus crews for irresponsible action.

E. BUCKLEY.

(2) LETTER SENT TO THE EDITOR, 'DAILY RECORD' .(April 6, 1964).

We, the tool room workers of L. Sterne and Co. wish to register the strongest possible protest against the vicious attack made by your Page One Comment-against the Corporation Bus Crews in their fight for better conditions and their right to strike. While realizing that this strike will inconvenience many of our fellow citizens we are sure that they will if allowed to hear the bus crews' case, support this strike. It is regrettable that 'The Record' should make such an unjust attack on the bus crews. Signed by 20 workers.

(3) LETTER PUBLISHED IN 'GLASGOW EVENING TIMES' .(April 13, 1964) From the nonsense written by "Disgusted Conductor" (Letters, April 9) I don't believe he has been the job long enough to get his cap badge wet! The strike was brewing far months as Bath street, and our union well knew. It wasn't caused by irresponsible people, or by anyone man in particular.

I have been in the job myself for 20 years and this was the first time that every garage came out together. So it stands to reason there was a lot more to it than what the public were told.

Each new change of duty means worse shifts for us for the same amount of wages. It is not the night

shift we object to. It is every shift. Our breaks get longer and longer and we have to sit around the

garage, as most of us stay in the schemes outside Glasgow. To get 7 hours work done it take us 10,11 or 12 hours to do this.

MARGARET CANNON,

Larkfield Garage.

(4) LETTER TO BRO. CALLAGHAN, SECRETARY IBROX BRANCH

TGWU.

I as one of Glasgow's clippies would--like to thank you for the speech~you made at both the meetings I attended. I am only sorry we have not more of your kind in this job; if we had we would not be working in the conditions we have today. So thank you for the effort that you made as we did not get much help from the press. This letter is on behalf of the staff of Gartcraig Garage.

JANET G.

(5) LETTER PUBLISHED IN 'GLASGOW EVENING TIMES' (April 13, 1964)

I am a conductor in Ibrox Garage and I am one of the so-called irresponsible, misguided transport

workers. We consider we were betrayed by our union officials. In what other industry would the union accept a longer working day and a loss of wages for their members? Do you think we didn't know what we were doing? We knew we would not receive strike money. This strike has cost us a week's wages. Peter Callaghan, our branch secretary, is the only union official we have any faith in. He only carries out the decisions agreed to by the vote of the members of Ibrox

Garage. Do not think that this trouble is all over. In the coming months trouble will flare up again and again until there is an improvement in our conditions.

IBROX CONDUCTOR.

(6) LETTER TO 'SOLIDARITY' FROM A GLASGOW BUS DRIVER.

In 1958 I became 'redundant' when the factory in which I was employed closed down. As I have a wife and four children to maintain, it was imperative that I obtain another job quickly.

The labour situation in Glasgow at that time was not particularly favourable. I had noticed previously an advertisement issued by the Glasgow Corporation Transport Department offering the following bait: A SECURE JOB (Good!) SICK PAY (Better) SUPERANNUATION (Better still!) THREE WEEKS HOLIDAY WITH PAY (Amazing!) ALL THIS AND WAGES TOO? (Rather hard to believe). The more I thought about it the less I liked it. There must be a

snag somewhere. However as it was largely a case of Hobson's Choice at the time, I decided to investigate further. Since I was already in possession of a Public Service Vehicle licence, I applied to the Transport Department for a job as a bus driver. I was called for an interview and two days later accepted for training as a G.C.T. Bus driver. After a short period of training I was passed out as a fully qualified bus driver. And then the fun began. The system of work is one week early and one week late, with alternate Sundays off. On my early week I might start as early as 4.30 am. This means rising at 3.30

am; breakfast at 3.45 am, leaving home at 4.0 am. My first break could be as late as 9.0 am which means over 5 hours on the road with nothing to eat. The period on the road certainly poses its problems, in the shape

of adverse road conditions, and an extremely trying public. Some intending passengers hold out their hands for buses they have no intention of boarding. Others board buses without looking to see where the bus is going, and then look pained when they find out that it is going nowhere near

their destination. It is the usual practice then to blame the conductor. On one occasion I was approaching a stop where a woman was standing with a dog on a lead. Unfortunately she moved forwards rather prematurely and was left with a string of guts on a lead. Another time I had to call out the fitter to fix a defect on the bus. As a result of this we were delayed for four minutes, whereupon some bright passenger reported me for malingering. This is typical of the thousands of frivolous complaints from the public which find their way to the Head Office every year.

Another facet of a bus driver's life is the complete slavery imposed by the time factor. I have often to race from one point to another to keep to my scheduled time, and then slow down so that I won't be early at the next. I remember the story about the driver who, on retirement, was presented with a watch whereupon he brained the offender. Due to the exigencies of the service it is impossible to have any real social life. Duties are spread over such a period as to make a very long day. Family life is also severely curtailed. On late shift for instance, the children are already away to school when I get up in the morning, and when they return, I have gone to work. I can go a whole week in this way without seeing my children. We work a supposed 42-hour week, spread over six days. In the case of a spread over duty starting at

6.30 am and finishing at 6.30 pm with, say, five hours off in between, and a normal seven hour duty on a Saturday, the week's work can be extended to 67 hours, excluding travelling time.

In order to make a living wage, I am forced to work my rest day, so that I can provide better conditions for the family which I hardly ever see. Present day conditions in the job are abominable (if you remain in the job for any length of time, this becomes abdominal). In 1939 a bus driver was rated third with regard to pay and conditions (in Glasgow), in relation to other industries. Since then there has been a steady downward trend, which has resulted in the job being one of the poorest paid of all. After the war, and since, other industries have made continuous advances, while the conditions of the transport workers have stagnated.

One of the main reasons for the decline is the general apathy of the workers themselves. Prior to the war men came into the Department with the intention of staying. Nowadays the job is used purely as a stopgap.

Many join for only a few weeks, some for anything up to a year. Few people have any intention of remaining. The result is that 75% of the workers have little or no interest in trying to improve the conditions. With the introduction of the latest schedules the conditions became even worse, something I hardly thought possible. However, more and more of the workers were beginning to see the way the wind was blowing. They were now starting to take a more intelligent interest in their working conditions. It was obvious that something had to be done to stop the rot. Some form of industrial action was obviously necessary. Thus arose the busmen's strike of April 1964, which was in fact the longest strike the Transport Department has known since the General Strike of 1926.

A. W.

BUSMEN

We are in full support of the busmen in their struggle with the Corporation bureaucrats and deplore the action of the Trade Union leaders who deserted the men during the strike. This gave the anti-strike, anti-worker Tory press more propaganda to use to put the public against the

strikers. We are disappointed at the anti-strike attitude of the majority of the public, who although inconvenienced, would not show solidarity with the busmen in the struggle against the Corporation bureaucrats who try to exploit them. The public are like the busmen, part of the working class who get exploited by the bosses - Tory businessmen and Corporation and Government officials. They should realise this. The strike will always be the weapon of the workers against the bosses and eventually they must use it to get rid of those who ponce off their labour.

We are glad and willing to show solidarity with the busmen by walking several miles to work. We will duplicate leaflets for them during any strike as we have done this time for Langside Strike Committee. We recommend that busmen and the public read the 'Solidarity'

pamphlet 'Busmen, What Next?'. This is the story of the London busmen's struggle but it could be about Glasgow or any British busmen. We would like to see the story of this strike and the Glasgow struggle written by the busmen themselves and we would print the pamphlet for them. How about it? It must be written by the busmen and not by outsiders like ourselves.

If distributed to the public it would show them the conditions regarding wages, working hours and working conditions which they have to put up with and show the strikers the need for unity among themselves.

GOOD LUCK

Members of the Independent Labour Party, Solidarity and Scottish Committee of
100, 48

Dundas Street, Glasgow C.1. DOU 6198.

The above leaflet was produced and distributed during the strike by supporters of the Independent Labour Party, Glasgow Solidarity, and Scottish Committee of 100~ Committee members provided the initial initiative and drive. Posters were prepared and put up, leaflets run off for the Langside Garage Strike Committee on the Committee of 100 duplicator, press statements issued and several hundred copies of the 'Busmen, What Next?' pamphlet * sold to busmen at a big strike meeting.

Our friends Walter Morrison and George Williamson, of the Scottish Committee of 100, write that the main weakness was the failure of the Left-wingers to get together immediately and to provide maximum help for the busmen, when it was most needed, at the beginning of the strike. If we had had the time, more help or a car we could have written or gone to the Strike Committees at all 11 garages and offered them the pamphlets ... We could have offered to print thousands of leaflets for

them ... The Strike Committees could have let the Glasgow public know their side of the story by leafleting them ... This was the worst failure of the strike ...

'The story of the strike must now be written and distributed to the busmen and public. The ILP and Committee of 100 office with its central position, full time staff, phone and duplicator is a good place for strike leaders and militant supporters to operate from and in future working class struggles everyone who wants to help should head for there.

HAVING IT BOTH WAYS OR YOU PAYS YOUR MONEY AND YOU
TAKES YOUR

CHOICE

For the amusement of readers, we print below extracts from the 1960 report of the General Manager to the Glasgow Corporation Transport Committee: 'Judging from our careful observations and the absence of any unanimous protest from the travelling public, it would appear that our 3.7% saving in services and frequencies has not reduced them below demand

...'

'...Had staff been available ... there would certainly have been an improvement in public relations which are often, under present circumstances ,'disturbed" by

gaps in services caused by crew shortage.'

Published by B. Potter, 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1, and Glasgow Solidarity, c/o 48

Dundas Street, Glasgow C.1.

The cover of this pamphlet shows a scab bus being driven out of Parkhead depot by John McMillan, a branch secretary of the TGWU. Ten policemen are on board, protecting him from his members.